

Food Safety when Traveling

7/16/07

School is out, temperatures are climbing, and many of us are hitting the highways for summer vacations. On long drives, cold drinks and snacks in the car will help sustain vacationers, but it is important to pack food safely during these hot summer months.

When temperatures rise, bacteria in food grow more quickly and can cause illness.

If you will be on the road for more than 30 minutes, pack cold, perishable foods in an ice chest with freezer packs or ice.

Meat and poultry can be packed while they are still frozen, which will help them stay cold longer. Just be sure to individually wrap raw meat and poultry and store it separately from cooked food or food that will be eaten raw, such as fruits and vegetables.

Once your cooler is packed with food, fill it up with ice. A full cooler will maintain a cold temperature longer than one that is just partially filled.

Besides considering food temperature, also consider eating healthy snacks and drinks. Fresh fruits and vegetables are great when traveling and are much healthier than candy or chips. Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under clean running water before eating them. Also, always wash your hands with soap and water before eating, and before and after handling or preparing food. If water is not available, use hand sanitizer.

Consider packing drinks in a second cooler so you don't have to open the food cooler as often, allowing it to stay cold longer. Drink plenty of water, flavored waters, or juice, and avoid alcohol and caffeinated beverages, which cause dehydration.

Store your coolers in the air-conditioned passenger compartment of your car, rather than in the hot trunk. Don't travel more than one hour with hot foods, unless you can be sure you'll have a way to reheat the dish quickly when you arrive at your destination. Hot foods should not be left out of temperature for more than two hours.

If you will be traveling more than one hour, offer to bring nuts, granola or whole-grain breads that do not have to be kept cool.

For more information, contact the Springfield-Greene County Health Department at (417) 864-1658, or visit the following Web sites:

Safe picnics and lunches

<http://missourifamilies.org/features/foodsafetyarticles/fdsfsfty20.htm>

Barbeque food safety

<http://missourifamilies.org/features/foodsafetyarticles/fdsftyfeature8.htm>

Don't pack "bugs" in your picnic basket

<http://missourifamilies.org/features/foodsafetyarticles/fdsfty37.htm>

Outdoor eating food safety tips

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/fsummer.html>